

Black Jack

Desperados'
SSG Trac Conklin
D, 1-8 CAV

Going inside Abar Layla with B, 3-82 FA

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Col. Bryan Roberts
Commander, 2nd Brigade
Combat Team,
1st Cavalry Division

I want to start by saying what a great job the Soldiers of the Black Jack Brigade did during the recent NTC rotation. Long days and even longer nights of patrolling, convoys, raids and humanitarian assistance operations tested our training, our ability to work as a team and accomplish our mission. Your performance was outstanding and I appreciate your hard work ... thank you.

On 20 June we received our orders and the next challenge for the Black Jack Brigade is deployment to Iraq in support of OIF 06-08. I am excited about being able to play our part in the War on Terrorism.

In the weeks to come we will continue to sharpen the combat skills of the brigade, focus on preparing Soldiers and families for the deployment and building the teams that will allow us to fight and win.

The Black Jack Charge continues to be the cornerstone of our success. We must all be **Positive, Polite, Professional, Prepared to Help and Prepared to Kill**. As we master these fundamentals we will not fail. Learn them, live them, make them a part of you!



During the deployment the support of our families will be crucial. I know we ask a lot of our families and we owe it to them to keep them informed and to ensure they are ready for our departure. Our families are part of the Black Jack Team and we won't stop caring for them because we deploy.

In closing I would like to take a last chance to thank you for your hard work so far. Keep focused in the months to come, train hard and remain flexible. I know the men and women of this brigade are up to the challenge of what lies ahead and I have every confidence of in your ability to complete the mission and return home safely.

Black Jack 6 – Out.

In this edition of *Living The Legend*, we focus on the Black Jack Brigade's month-long rotation to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.



While at the NTC, Black Jack Soldiers took part in the new training format, which was geared toward real-life operations that are currently happening in Iraq.

Whether practicing convoy procedures, searching for weapon caches or conducting humanitarian assistance mis-

sions, every day was a learning experience.

Over the course of the next few months, we will take these lessons and build on them as we prepare for our upcoming deployment later this year.

I would like to thank the Soldiers from the 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment who deployed to the NTC and assisted us in our mission of providing media coverage to the Black Jack Brigade.

Once in Iraq, we hope to continue to publish *Living the Legend* on a regular basis and would like to encourage anyone with a story idea or suggestion to please stop by 2nd Brigade Annex Building on 72nd and Battalion Ave. or give us a call at 288-5143.

Spc. Robert Yde
robert.yde@hood.army.mil

-RJY

1-8 Cav.

Sgt. Scott Snyder takes aim while his assistant team leader, Spc. David Schrauger, prepares to adjust his MILES gear

*Story and Photo by
Spc. Alexis Harrison*

Weapon Fundamentals

During the period of time before heading into “the box,” Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment took time to keep familiar with what could arguably be the most important piece of equipment they carry: their weapons.

Soldiers from Company A., 1-8 Cav., gathered to zero in the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement Systems gear and refresh their skills on their M-16A2 and M-4 rifles.

“For the infantry, it’s life or death. A Soldier’s weapon is quintessential to his mission,” said Sgt. Scott Snyder, a dismount team leader with Co. A., 1-8 Cav.

Snyder watched as each of his Soldiers took fire on the zeroing target about 50 meters away from them. Afterward, he made minor adjustments to the MILES gear.

“We keep in mind the fundamentals of marksmanship like breathing, trigger squeeze and sight picture,” said Snyder. “We perform function checks. We’re constantly disassembling and reas-

sembling our weapons. We have a lot of new privates that have never used weapons like this before. Training like this helps with the basic understanding of equipment. It also helps reinforce having faith in your equipment to perform when you need it to.”

“Your weapon is important because it protects you at any given time,” said Pvt. Mathew Metter, a San Diego native who is a squad automatic weapon gunner with Co. A.

“You don’t necessarily even need to shoot it. We try to make it muscle memory or second nature. It’s part of our job to dismantle our weapon, put it back together and know it inside out.”

The Wolf Pack Platoon still had several days before it rolled out to “the box,” however, the Soldiers eagerly awaited the many challenges that lay ahead.

“When we go out to ‘the box’, privates will engage the enemy, and they’ll hear the MILES gear going off,” said Snyder. “It’s a morale booster to see the fruits of their labor.”



Sgt. Michael Ray, C.O.L.T. Member
HHC, 2nd Brigade Combat Team

Just in time for the deployment !

**Be the first on your block to
have the Black Jack SGT Ray!**

**He comes equipped with an
M-4 Rifle, four Magazines,
all the HOOAH gear, and
a P-38, so he can
open up a can of Whoop --- !!!**

**NO ASSEMBLY REQUIRED
NO BATTERIES REQUIRED
THE ENEMY -- REQUIRED**

**2ND BRIGADE, 1CD
COMMANDER & PITBOSS:
COL BRYAN ROBERTS**

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER:
MAJ DAVE SHOUPE**

**PAO NCOIC:
SSG KAP KIM**

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PFC KATE HUFF**

Living
THE LEGEND
Black Jack

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*Sgt. Stephen Clark searches a
detainee in the village of Wadi Al
Ra'id*

**Story and Photos by
Spc. Robert Yde**

Black Jack MPs

Raid in Wadi Al Ra'id

Sitting in the gunner's hatch of his Humvee, Pvt. Adrian Velazquez scans the horizon as his platoon makes final preparations for the day's mission.

"It's going to be a hostile environment – I'm expecting shots fired and IEDs (improvised explosive devices) on the road," the San Antonio native said. "Even if there isn't, it's always good to be prepared."

And so another day of training begins at the National Training Center for the military police officers of the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

Since the Black Jack Brigade arrived at Forward Operating Base Detroit, the MPs have been busy.

"There have been nights where we went to bed at 12 and were back up by 3," explained Spc. Jon-Erik Bradford, a driver with the MP platoon.

However, for most of these Soldiers the long hours are just part of the job.

"I enjoy being in the field more than in the rear," added Bradford, whose father was also an MP in both the Army and Marine Corps.

After several days of running escort missions and various types of lane training, May 30

marked the platoon's first opportunity to plan and execute a raid mission.

"It's a platoon size raid on Wadi Al Ra'id to intercept the movement of a weapon cache," Staff Sgt. Jeff Chovan said, explaining the day's mission.

The MPs convoyed for an hour and a half along the dusty desert roads before reaching the outskirts of the village.

Before entering the village, a recon team, which included the platoon and squad leaders, was sent out to survey the scene. Based upon their observations the MPs were able to make adjustments to their initial plan before converging on the village.

While Soldiers from the platoon's 1st squad led the raid, clearing buildings and apprehending several suspects, Soldiers from the 2nd squad set up a detainee holding area and prepared to collect evidence.

As detainees were brought in, they were searched for contraband, briefly questioned and photographed.

"We look for any kind of intel – papers with caches written on them, as well as explosives, weapons or propaganda," said Sgt. Rebekah With-

MPs with 2BSTB fill out and review evidence forms at a detainee holding area at the NTC at Fort Irwin, Calif.



ers, a team leader with 2nd squad.

“We photograph the search so they can’t say that we did this or that to them,” explained Bradford, who, in addition to his driving duties also served on the crime scene investigation team.

“The CSI team is designed to come in after a building is cleared to document the people and the evidence,” added Spc. Shane Allen, a gunner with 2nd squad.

Anything that is taken from a detainee is annotated on an evidence form.

“That way they can’t say we confiscated something and did not give it back,” Withers said.

As the 1st squad continued to secure building after building, the MPs eventually completed their mission, unearthing the large weapon cache that they had set out to find.

“From what we’ve been told this is very realistic to what we will be doing in Iraq,” Chovan, the platoon sergeant, said after the raid.

For many of the Soldiers in Chovan’s platoon this was the first time that they had the chance to conduct this type of mission.

“It was a good experience of working together—first time clearing buildings together,” said Velazquez, who has been with the platoon for just three months.

In the short time that he has been with the unit, Velazquez says he has learned a lot.

“They’re always on me - not because they don’t like me, but they want me to learn,” he ex-



A suspected insurgent is detained by “Black Jack” MPs during a raid at the NTC.

plained. “In this platoon, everybody helps you no matter what.”

“The new Soldiers are learning the way it happens,” Chovan said of his younger Soldiers.

Not only are his Soldiers learning their individual roles, but the platoon is learning to operate as a collective unit, Chovan explained.

The mission was a success, but Chovan quickly pointed out that there were many aspects that could be improved upon, and also acknowledged that training is all about practice, evaluation and improvement.

“Today was a great training event,” Chovan said. “Everybody got better - everybody learned something.”

“Gambler” Soldiers Awarded

Story and photo by
Spc. Robert Yde

“Good leadership will recognize achievements while they are still fresh,” explained Capt. Justin Van Beusekon, personnel officer for the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

“We also wanted the other Soldiers to see this in order to set a high standard,” he added, after watching four “Gambler” Soldiers receive Army Achievement Medals and several others receive coins from 15th Brigade Support Battalion commander Lt. Col. Jeffrey Vieira at the National Training Center May 24.

With just two days, before the Black Jack Brigade headed into the training area known as “the box,” Vieira awarded the four AAMs and 22 coins for various tasks and actions that had led to the battalion’s smooth transition from Fort Hood and successful integration to the NTC.

“I just found out I’d be getting it this morning,” said Pfc. David Brown, a fueler with Co. A., referring to the AAM he received.

The Beaufort, SC native said that his initial reaction was simply, “Wow,” adding that he was surprised to be receiving an award for just doing his job.

“He’s a key member in getting us to ‘the box’ and ready for battle,” explained Van Beusekon of Brown, who has been working 15 hour days since arriving to the NTC.

“I get up at three in the morning and work until six at night,” Brown said of his daily routine.



Lt. Col. Jeffrey Vieira pins an AAM on the pocket of Pfc. David Brown.

Along with Brown, Staff Sgt. Angela Ewing, Headquarters Company, Sgt. Erik Johnson, Bravo Company and Sgt. Alfredo Pena, Charlie Company were also awarded AAMs.

“The four Soldiers out there really deserve early recognition,” Van Beusekon said.

“We have been executing at an extremely high level and this is due to troop leading procedures,” Vieira said. “The Soldiers truly excelled.”

Although Vieira’s Soldiers still have several weeks of training to complete before returning to Fort Hood, he reminded them that they were progressing every day.

“This is one phase of the operations complete,” Vieira said, referring to operations performed in the staging area.

“I hear we’re going to learn a lot of lessons in this rotation, Vieira said casually, as he addressed his battalion one last time before heading into “the box.”

With excitement building in his voice, Vieira added, “We’re going to teach the OCs (observer controllers) how to do it right.”



Red Dragons



3-82 patrols the village of Abar Layla

*A villager is searched after being
removed from a suspicious vehicle*

*Story and Photos by
Spc. Robert Yde*

In the heart of Abar Layla, Capt. David Freeman made his way through a sea of people.

“Whatever happens, whether good or bad, in this AO (area of operations)

comes from this town,” said Freeman, the commander of Battery B., 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

Freeman and his Soldiers were in town June 4 to meet with the town’s leadership and a representative of the Iraqi Police Department to discuss ongoing humanitarian projects that the battalion had been conducting in the area.

Elements from 3-82FA had been conducting presence patrols in and around this village for the last four days,

“The mission has been two-fold,” explained Freeman. “To provide security to the town of Abar Layla in conjunction with the Iraqi police and to work on contracts for central services such as school supplies, water containers and generators for power.”

Scenarios such as this are all part of the new training format at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. Force-on-force battles and traditional war fighting are no longer a part of the month-long training exercise. Today’s training is geared toward real-life operations that are currently happening in Iraq – one of the most important being relationship building.

“The relationship between us and the villagers is progressing,” said Freeman. “They were skeptical at first, but we’re trying to show them that we’re willing to help them.”

Freeman said most of the villagers had been positive about working with the Soldiers, but it was still not an entirely secure environment.

Just outside of town, Staff Sgt. Joseph Will and his Soldiers found a large weapons cache in a burned out trailer



Capt. David Freeman and 1st Lt. Pete Balke meet with town leaders.

“It was full of 155 rounds,” Will, a native of Hope Mills, NC explained. .

The gunnery sergeant with Batt. B., also had his Soldiers stop and search a particularly suspicious vehicle that continued to come and go from the village.

The same white pickup truck had been making these short trips for the past several days, explained Will.

“We thought they were probably either taking or bringing back weapons from a cache in the ground or in a cave,” Will said.

A search of the vehicle and its passengers revealed nothing, but it helped ease the minds of the Soldiers.

“We did not know what was going on – it was out of the ordinary and we were concerned for our safety,” Will said after the search.

Safety is paramount, according to Will, and Soldiers of Batt. B have been working closely with the Iraqi police to provide a secure environment in Abar Layla.

“We have been conducting police training and joint patrols with the IP,” explained Freeman. “We are here to assist them in securing peace – they have to understand that their security is in their own hands.”

Soldiers from 3-82 FA will continue to build upon the progress they have made in Abar Layla, where, for the time being, all that can be hoped for is that the good days, such as this one, outnumber the bad days.

“We kept the civilians alive and the Soldiers safe – no shots were fired,” said Will. “That’s a good day.”

4 - 9 Cav. Soldiers focus on the little things before big mission

Story and
Photos by
Staff Sgt.
Kap Kim

Sgt. Gonzalo Casarobles, a squad leader with Troop C., 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, wakes up every morning and checks each of his Soldiers' personal equipment.

The El Monte, Calif. native will check to see if they have all of their weapons, night optical devices and enough water in their hydration system. He said he ensures each of his Soldiers have everything they need to operate at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. It is all a part of what his unit does to get ready for their daily missions known as the pre-combat checks and pre-combat inspections.

"I have to check ... to make sure no equip-

*Pvt. Justin Blackmon (left)
and Pvt. Josiah Whittingham
PMCS their mortar vehicle*



ment is lost," Casarobles said. "I have to do this until it's almost muscle memory – get them into the habit of always checking their equipment."

After making sure his Soldiers are OK, Casarobles and the crew will go to their motor pool and start their preventive maintenance checks and services.

For his driver, Pvt. Justin Blackmon, the job is to check almost the entire 1064A2 Mortar Track-Vehicle's performance.

According to Blackmon, his checks include almost 100 different items, and if any of the track's components are not in working order, he said he

Dark Horse

will immediately have one of the unit's mechanics fix the deficiency.

Casarobles' crew spends a couple of hours everyday inspecting all of the track's components.

"We check and then sometimes, we double check," Casarobles said. "We do this so when we roll out, we have everything we need and nothing is breaking or falling off."

The unit's message of their PCCs and PCIs resonates to the lowest level. Pvt. Josiah Whittingham, a Troop C., 4-9 Cav. mortarman, said he fully understands that not performing the sometimes tedious task of making sure all of his sensitive items are "dummy corded" and all of the equipment is functional is one of the most important tasks of the day.

"It's the little things that count," the Canton, N.Y. native said. "Our platoon sergeant makes us know that everything little thing counts, and that we have to know it."

According to 2nd Lt. Juan Cantu, a platoon leader assigned to Troop C., 4-9 Cav., all the checks they perform always have mission accomplishment in mind.

"All this is very important," the Houston native said. "You want to make sure you don't forget anything when you go to war – when you go to

combat. So you can perform the mission."

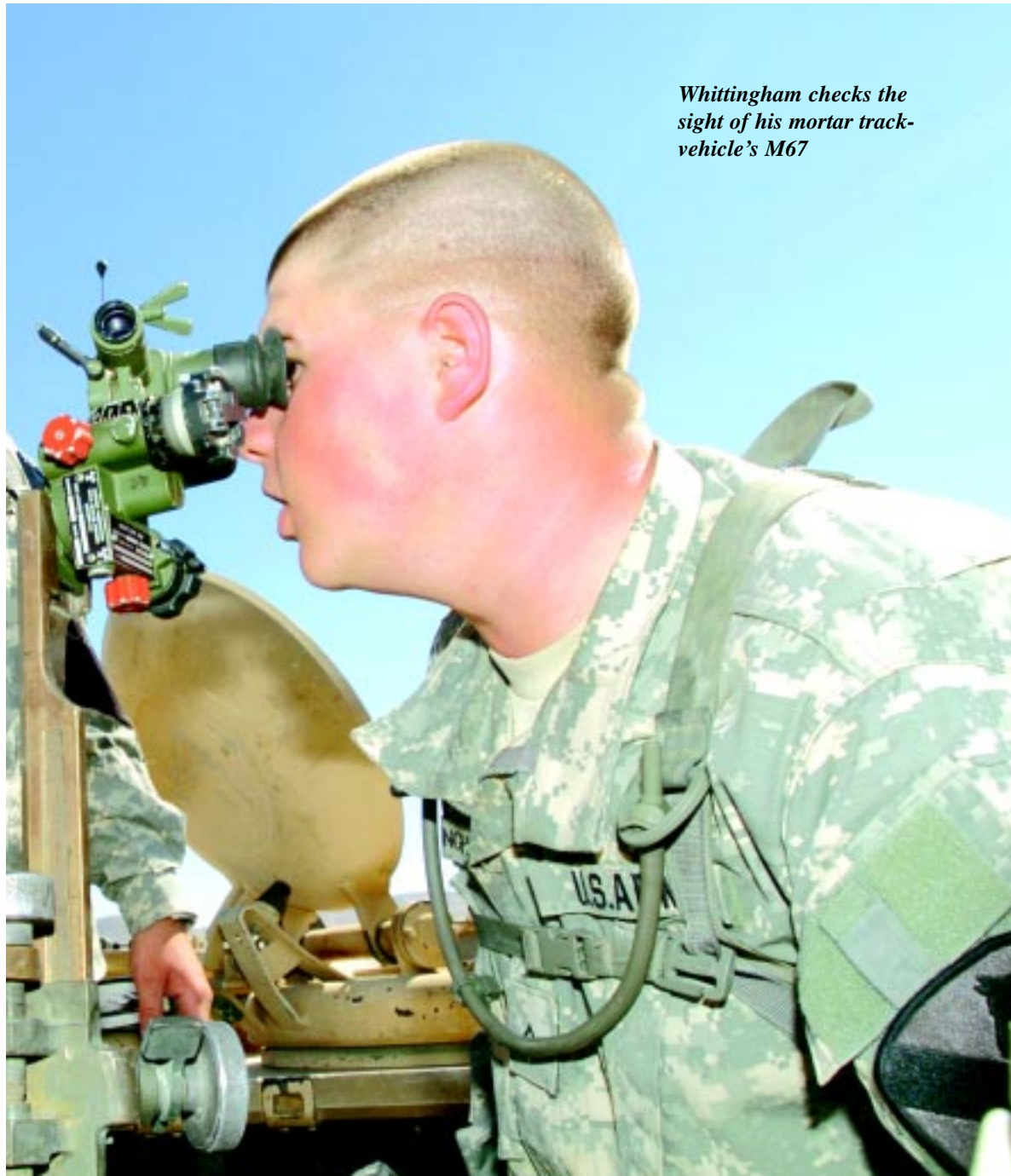
Whittingham also said the mission is the only thing on his mind when he checks his equipment.

"When it comes down to it, things have to be combat ready - it eliminates the stress," Whittingham said. "When we go to war, we need to focus on our mission and not our equipment. We can't compromise the mission."

Aside from the mission, Cantu also added that force protection is paramount when it comes to the attention-to-detail checks.

"You just can't put time or a price on anyone's life," Cantu said. "This is one of those things you have to train to standard."

Whittingham checks the sight of his mortar track-vehicle's M67



Soldiers Re-up at NTC

After nearly a month of battling heat, fatigue and opposing forces at the National Training Center, 14 Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division took part in a mass reenlistment ceremony June 11, officiated by Black Jack commander Col. Bryan Roberts.

"It's a great day," Roberts told his Soldiers. "The only thing that could have made it better was if your families could have been here."

"We appreciate the opportunity to do this with you as your second family," he added.

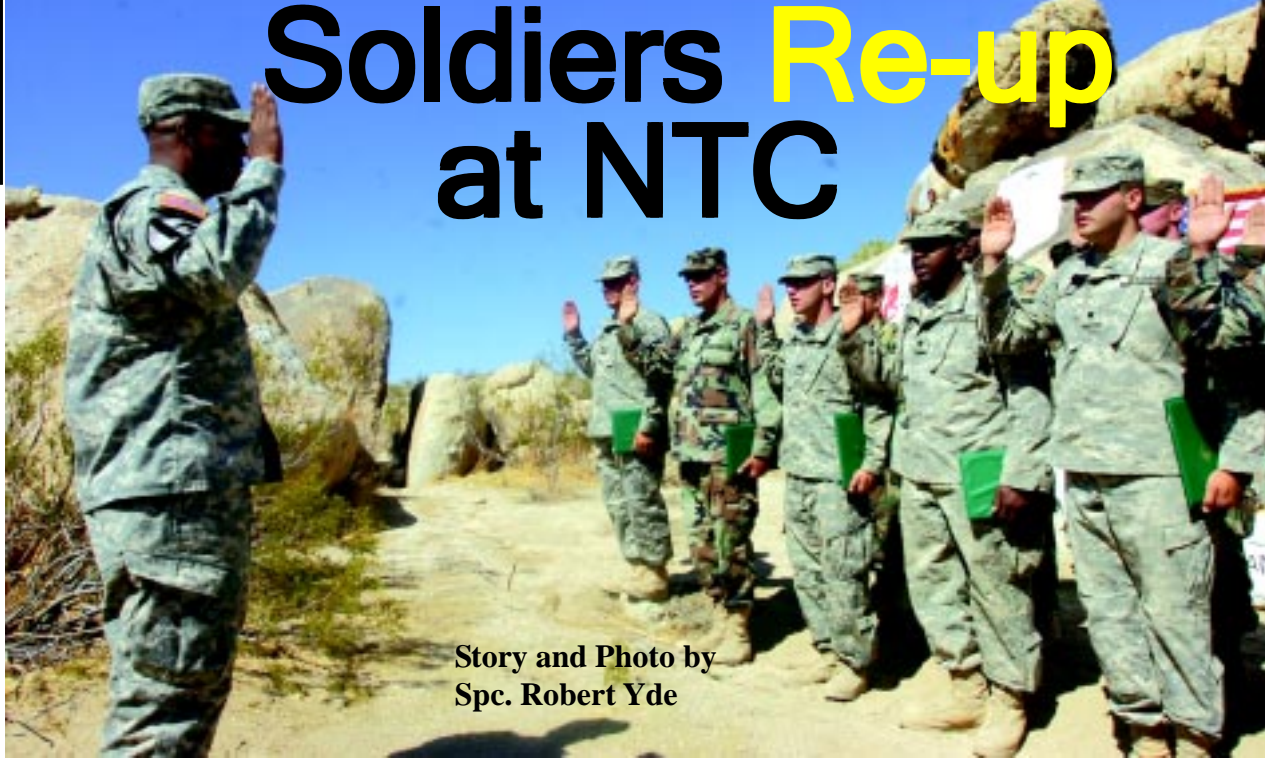
The mass reenlistment ceremony was part of a package of reenlistment incentives offered by the brigade's retention office. Soldiers were also given a choice between taking a daytrip to Las Vegas or receiving a seat on the first flight back to Fort Hood.

The idea for the incentives package was borrowed from the 25th Infantry Division, which was rotating out of the NTC when the "Black Jack" Brigade arrived, and had success with a similar package.

"It helps the command make its mission and gives something back to the Soldiers," explained Master Sgt. Randy Kuhnau, the brigade's senior career counselor.

While the Soldiers acknowledged that they appreciate the incentives, each of them had their own reasons for reenlisting.

"My brother kind of pushed me to reenlist," said Pfc. Michael Zimmerman, a combat engineer with Company E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment.



**Story and Photo by
Spc. Robert Yde**

"Black Jack" commander, Col. Bryan Roberts reenlists 14 of his Soldiers

The Martinez, Calif. native added, "He says it's good for me to spend a couple more years in the Army; see what I can do – I might enjoy it and stay."

For other Soldiers, like Spc. Derek Tucker, a track vehicle mechanic with Co. E, 1-5 Cav., family obligations were the main motivation to reenlist.

Tucker, who is originally from Gary, Ind., and has two children and a monthly mortgage, said that staying in the Army was in his family's best interest.

Some Soldiers just like the Army lifestyle.

"I enjoy what I do," explained Sgt. Jermaine Wisdom, the unit supply sergeant for Co. E, 1-5 Cav. "I enjoy the military."

The native of Opelika, Ala. has spent 12 years in the military - six in the Army and six in the Marine Corps, and said that he is "going to stick with it until the end."

A Soldier's decision to reenlist is not only a reflection of his beliefs, but also a reflection of his respective unit and its leadership, according to Roberts.

"What its saying is that the unit is doing the right thing," Roberts said. "That it's doing the right thing for you and for your family and that you want to stay a part of it. It's a great day for the Army."

LTC Kenneth Crawford, COMMANDER
2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion



SPARTAN 6

LTC Dale Kuehl, COMMANDER
1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment



BLACK KNIGHT 6

LTC Patrick Matlock, COMMANDER
4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment



DARK HORSE 6

COL Bryan Roberts, COMMANDER
2nd Brigade Combat Team



BLACK JACK 6

2ND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM
1ST CAVALRY DIVISION



NTC 06-07

LTC Michael Tarsa, COMMANDER
3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery



RED DRAGON 6

LTC JEFFREY VIEIRA, COMMANDER
15th Brigade Support Battalion



GAMBLER 6

CSM JAMES LEE, COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR
2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division



BLACK JACK 9

LTC JEFFREY SAUER, COMMANDER
1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment



MUSTANG 6



LTC Jeffrey T. Bauer, commander
1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment

LTC Bauer Facts:

- > U.S. Military Academy at West Point Grad
- > Served in the 8th Cavalry, 3rd Ranger Division, Golan Heights, Germany
- > Was responsible for overall ROTC recruiting in the greater Midwest
- > Shares the record of "Most Time in the Cav" with LTC Antlock



LTCJTB 2008



CSM James F. Lee, Sergeant Major
2nd Brigade Combat Team

CSM Lee Facts:

- > Nephew of St. John's, Vermont
- > Was a Drill Sergeant
- > Is still a Drill Sergeant
- > TROOPIC OFFICIALS WERE TOO AFRAID TO TELL HIM THAT THE TROOP eventually comes to an end
- > Knows everything about the tank ... because he invented it



LTCJTB 2008



LTC Jeffrey J. Vieira, commander
15th Brigade Support Battalion

LTC Vieira Facts:

- > University of California - Irvine Grad
- > Served in multiple assignments throughout Germany
- > Been deployed to AFOR, Turkey and Iraq twice
- > Very few people spell his name properly



LTCJTB 2008



LTC Michael Tarsa, commander
3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery

LTC Tarsa Facts:

- > U.S. Military Academy at West Point Grad
- > Is married to a fellow USMA Grad
- > Eased an opponent and an Air Assault Brigade and is Ranger Trained
- > Has his "Pocket Hercules" on his dirty work
- > Enjoys "Raining Steel" on the opponent



LTCJTB 2008



COL Bryan T. Roberts, commander
2nd Brigade Combat Team

COL Roberts Facts:

- > Wife is also an Army Colonel
- > Worked in the White House and Pentagon during the Clinton Administration
- > Rescued horses that were stranded during JTF Katrina
- > Is now a color commentator



LTCJTB 2008



LTC Patrick Matlock, commander
4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment

LTC Matlock Facts:

- > U.S. Military Academy at West Point Grad
- > Started military career at Fort Hood and the 1st Cavalry Division
- > Is related to Gen. (Ret) Teddy Franks
- > Male stationed in Germany, BRIGADE THE COPIED GERMAN ARMY'S BOESSELER ALL-AROUND RECONNAISSANCE Competition ... HOORAY IN



LTCJTB 2008



LTC Dale C. Huel, commander
1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment

LTC Huel Facts:

- > U.S. Military Academy at West Point Grad
- > Was born in St. Paul, MN but grew up in Huntsville, AL
- > Recruited staff officers all from his hometown
- > Has a degree in International Relations
- > Has worked for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Brigades and at the Division level in the 1st Cav



LTCJTB 2008



LTC Henry J. Crawford, commander
2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion

LTC Crawford Facts:

- > Texas A&M graduate
- > Has two foreign jump wings
- > Has a Master Parachutist Badge
- > Has a Paratrooper Badge
- > Has the Ranger Tab
- > Made Chuck Norris run back to his room during combat training



LTCJTB 2008



3-82 FA

Alpha Gators - "It's the best training I've ever received."

Photo and story by Pvt. Tiffany Mercer
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The mission: capture or kill a terrorist leader known for his foul treatment of the local residents and planting improvised explosive devices against coalition forces. His two bodyguards should be with him and are also wanted.

The plan: move in and accomplish the objective with as little resistance as possible.

During their time in "the box" while deployed to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., Soldiers with the 2nd Black Jack Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division were given this situation as a way to prepare them for Iraq.

Soldiers from Battery A., 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, convoyed out to a make-shift Iraqi town in the middle of the Mojave Desert, prepared for the scenarios that lay ahead.

Training began with a game-plan briefing before they entered the actual town. The battery was split into three different teams, each with its own mission. One team would secure the area outside the town, another would secure inside the town and the last team would perform a search and seizure.

After each of the iterations, the teams rotated, so that each group would get a chance to practice from another perspective. A total of four iterations were completed.

While carrying out their mission, the troops encountered many different scenarios.

A cast of Iraqi citizens were set up in the town to make the training more realistic.

Sometimes they were cooperative, while other times they became hostile.

Having Arabic interpreters and Iraqi citizens in a town makes the training more realistic, explained 1st Lt. Daniel A. Gomez, Batt. A executive officer.

The Soldiers reacted to all the scenarios in the way they had been trained, Gomez said.

"When they were fired upon, they returned fire," he said.

"When they were close to a civilian that was unarmed, they responded in the right way. They used escalation of force properly."

Feeling confident about the job and personal reactions is a key factor to completing the mission.

"I personally think I reacted well, because I had no hesitation" said Pvt. Joseph A. Riqueros, an artilleryman with 3-82 FA.

This rotation supplements the training that these Soldiers have received at Fort Hood, which makes 3-82 more prepared for their deployment to Iraq, Riqueros said.

The scenarios at the NTC helped the troops better understand what might happen when they're deployed, Gomez said, "I've ever received," he added.



NTC Photo Journal





Fuelers provide ‘Lifeline to Victory’

Story and Photos by
Staff Sgt. Kap Kim



*Co. G, 15th BSB fuelers get
their tankers ready to refuel*

A few mortar rounds rocked Forward Operating Base Dallas June 4, where the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and its supporting units call home.

In the next few minutes, Soldiers ran to their ready position. The Quick Reaction Force knew their next mission was to find the perpetrators responsible for launching the attack, and so they readied their vehicles for a patrol outside the wire.

On another side of the FOB, four Soldiers assigned to Company G, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, knew exactly what their next mission was: fueling the force.

The four Soldiers serve as FOB Dallas’ petroleum supply specialists, and for the small team, it means that they will fuel the vehicles for the Soldiers who will go on patrol.

“Without us, there is no urban combat,” said Sgt. Antrone Vaughn, a native of Holly Springs, Miss. “Without us, there is no Bradley in the streets of Baghdad; there is no sleeping in the vehicles

when it’s cold; there is no DFAC (Dining Facility); there is no ice – we fuel the fight, and without us, nothing moves.”

For the Soldiers they support, having fuel is as important as the water buffalos, and for that, Staff Sgt. Kenneth Patterson, the fuel handler supervisor said that they refer to themselves as the “Lifeline to Victory.”

“They help us out so much ... much more than these guys out here will know,” said Spc. Shawn McDowell, Battery B., 3-82 FA.

Even for Pvt. Charles Hill, of Riverside, Calif., who has only been doing this job for about three months, the importance of the job is something his sergeants have ingrained into him, and he takes his role in the FOB seriously.

“When there are a lot of people in line waiting for fuel, we don’t have time to play around,” Hill said. “They might have to rescue people, and they might not have enough fuel to do their mission.”

Due to the nature of their National Train-

ing Center rotation, the fuelers have to run an around-the-clock operation with two teams of four.

According to Sgt. Nelson Avalos, the task of always fueling the hundreds of vehicles, generators and anything else that needs fuel becomes somewhat daunting for them at times.

“You get tired, but you just have to get past it to get the mission done,” said Avalos, who calls North Hills, Calif. home.

On any given day, the fuelers pump an average of a 1,000 gallons of JP-8 fuel from their two M978 Hemmet fuel tanks. There are times when they must coordinate more fuel depending on 3-82 FA’s mission requirements. So, they forecast and coordinate delivery with their next higher echelon, Company A., 15th BSB, at FOB Detroit. During those times, they take a fuel tanker in a convoy with them to refuel.

They perform their duties with safety in mind, both personal and environmental. Yet, for the few times spillage happens, it’s ceremonial.

For Hill, he received his “baptism,” as the fuelers call it, during this NTC rotation.

The team operates on very little of the creature comforts most of their fellow Soldiers have. With no shade, they constantly sweat in their soaked coveralls. The pungent scent of JP-8 fuel is a constant in their lives, and it overpowers the weeks they have spent without a shower. Yet, for Vaughn, the smell is “sweet.”

“I love the smell of fuel,” he said. “As long as you can smell this, you know you are still alive on the battlefield.”

For Vaughn, the task of refueling isn’t at all difficult, following the combat units to the battlefield and very little predictability of when they will come to the fuel point to refuel is.

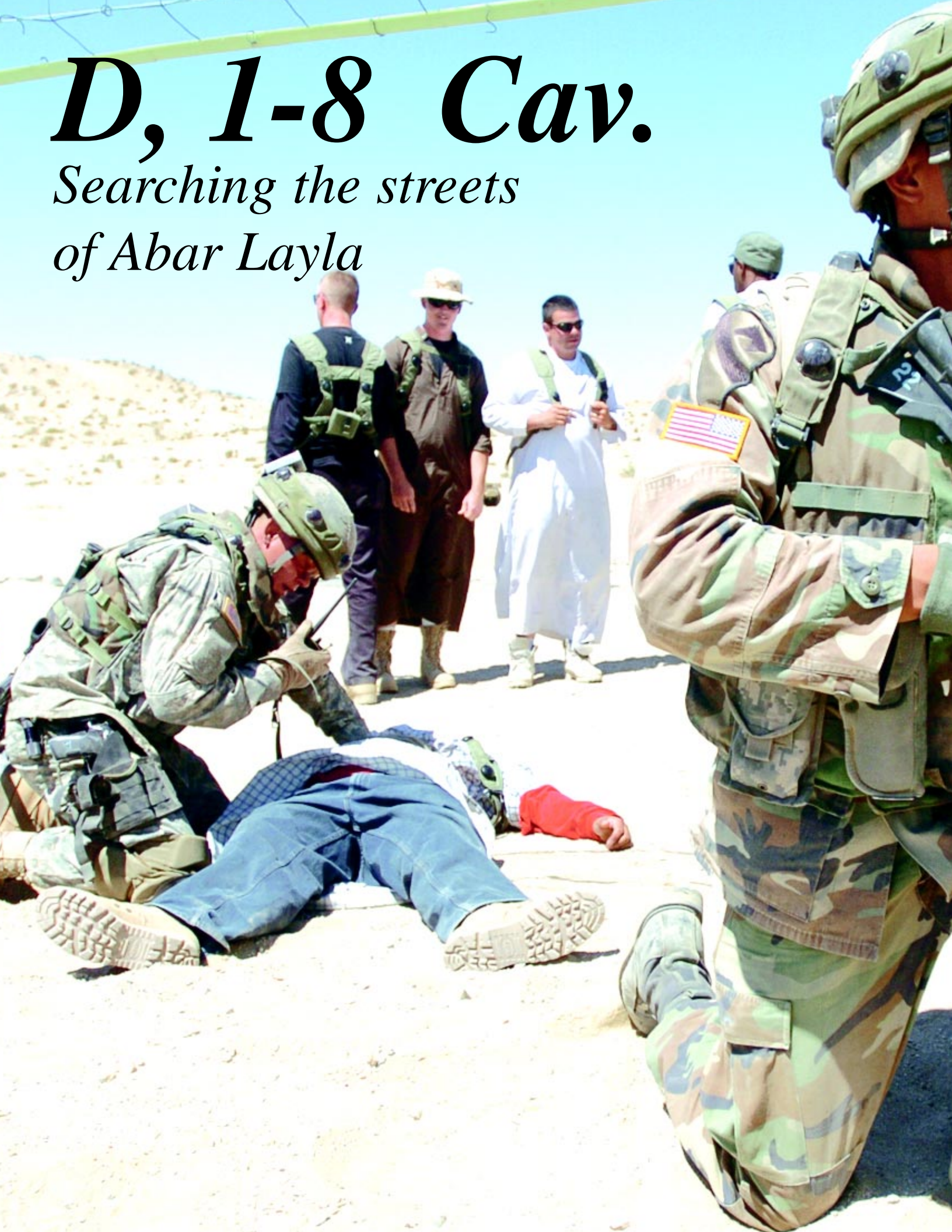
“Just being where we are is difficult,” he said motioning around his surroundings. “There’s no set time they might come for fuel, but when they do, we’ll be ready ... we have to be, we are the soul of the force.”


*Sgt. Antrone Vaughn
refuels a HMMWV
back from a patrol*



D, 1-8 Cav.

*Searching the streets
of Abar Layla*





*Spc. Richard Martinez
provides security while
Staff Sgt. Trac Conklin
treats an injured casualty*

Story and Photos by
Staff Sgt. Kap Kim

The morning started early, like every morning does when you are assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Black Jack Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

After a quick breakfast, Capt. Earl Doyle, Co. D. commander, passed out the operations order and brought together all the key players for a mission rehearsal.

The “sticks training” mission, without all the variables, sounded relatively simple. The Desperados were to go into the town of Abar Layla and detain a suspected target who was leading an insurgent group and smuggling weapons. The Soldiers entered the town, some 15 kilometers away from their forward operating base May 31.

The tactical road march of eight vehicles and more than 50 Soldiers went rather smoothly. When their convoy was within a few kilometers of the village,

the scouts sent a message that they had possibly located their target. Soon after, the rest of the convoy and its troops stormed the northwest part of the village. Doyle, who kept command and control of his element by radio, met with the Iraqi Police chief to receive help.

During Doyle's meeting with the IP chief, his team executed the plan by entering the village and clearing building after building. This was their first of two iterations, and they took minimal casualties. During the search, a Soldier entered a room full of females. When the screams reached the other side of the village, it summoned a mob of male villagers to the site.

Within a matter of seconds, a warning shot was fired into the air in front of the crowd as a deterrent to their advances toward their element.

It didn't work out the way they intended, and the angry mob kept inching closer as they shouted anti-coalition chants.

The advance of more than 100 angry men became too much for the small element.

"I was just looking out for my Soldiers," said Spc. Richard Martinez, an armor crewmember. "I was getting a little aggressive because it was my first time in a leadership position, and I was trying to look out for them."

Although the target was not detained during this iteration, due to the escalating aggression, Doyle made a decision to egress out of the village with all his Soldiers in tact, and according to Doyle, the situation was just "ugly."

Yet, Doyle said that this was all for training and learning.

"I'd rather make all our mistakes out here than out there," the Houston native said about making the same mistakes in a real-world environment.

For the Soldiers executing the room-to-room raid, the mission was a success in different



Pfc. Victor Atoigue keeps an eye on the villagers

areas.

"It's excellent training for our troops," said Cpl. Jeffrey Jacobus, an armor crewmember. "This type of training boosts morale. They are excited about doing 'hooah' stuff."

According to Jacobus, there were a few times during their first iteration that they had to deviate from the rehearsals they practiced before. Yet, he added that that is another training objective good for the Soldiers to learn.

Jacobus, a Batesville, Ind. native, said, "It (training at the NTC) brought our unit together. The guys stay up to train and talk about the mission."

An observer/controller team, who watched

the Soldiers perform their mission, provided feedback and constructive criticism for the commander and his unit when they left the village and rallied together.

“These lanes are designed for you to use your unit’s SOPs (standing operating procedures). We are not here to replicate Iraq - we can’t. Though we are here to try to give you an accurate replication.” said Capt. Fred Huh, a Tarantula Team observer/controller. “You have to use controlled aggression. If you’re not aware of what you are doing in this environment, just think about when bullets are flying. So, you have to be cognizant of your surrounding at all times.”

Although the mission objective was not met, Doyle noted that the training was a “learning” experience for his guys.

When deployed, Doyle said the raid mission should go a lot smoother since they would

have patrolled the area and would possibly know more about the village.

“This may be easier in Iraq, since this would be in our sector,” he said. “The time constraints were an issue because we didn’t know too much about this town.”

After the first iteration, Doyle regrouped his men, spoke about the lessons they learned, and they went into the village to try some new tactics.

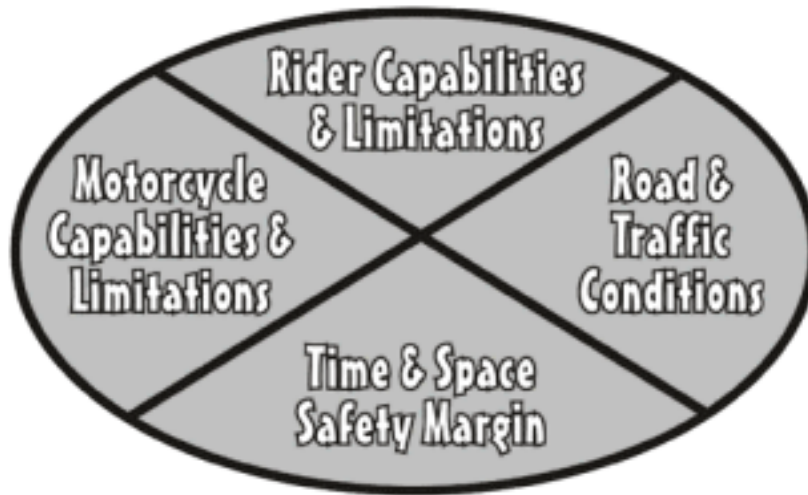
Going back into the village, Staff Sgt. Trac Conklin, a squad leader from Kettlefalls, Wash., said he told his guys to keep their “heads in the game” and listen to the changes in the mission and hopefully they’d catch the guy this time.

The advice seemed to work out during their second time through. The outcome took less than 15 minutes, which was more than half the time it took during the first run through, with only a couple of casualties for his unit and the villagers.

1st Lt. Corey Sherk, a fire support officer attached to 1-8 Cav. helps maintain security in the town of Abar Layla



Oval of Safety



Motorcycles have evolved a great deal in recent years and continue to change. The changes usually represent an improvement in handling, function and, often, in safety. Motorists are constantly changing, as are automobiles. And while the mechanical factors have typically improved, the same can't be said for the human factors. Based on this information you cannot know all there is to know about riding. To enjoy riding don't be foolish; be properly clothed, well trained, informed, and safe.

Reenlist



If not for you,
then for them



1-5 Cav. Tankers

Story and photo by Spc. Beatrice Florescu-Vila Verde
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



An M-1 Abrams tank stands ready for its next mission

An impressive fighting tool, the M-1 Abrams tank is a very carefully maneuvered instrument, with a team responsible for all operations, enabling a capability and level of fire power that has no rival on the battlefield.

A tank crew is composed of a gunner, loader, driver and a tank commander, all essential to the perfect operation of a tank, said Spc. Dee J. Nichols, loader with 3rd Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Black Jack Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. Normally each unit will have four tanks in it, Nichols said.

The tank commander coordinates the elements of the crew and bears the responsibility for the entire team. With leadership comes responsibility in a teamwork battlefield environment.

The gunner shoots enemy targets as they appear. The loader is responsible for the ammunition loading of the tank. The driver controls where the tank goes, Nichols said.

The only team member who can float and

sometimes perform other tasks if needed, is the loader, said Nichols. The tank cannot drive itself, or shoot itself, and no one can perform these functions at the same time.

With so many moving pieces, two weeks of preparation were necessary for this National Training Center rotation. "It takes a lot of work to make a tank work right and you have to pay close attention to what you are doing," Nichols said.

A transformation that was implemented within units since the war in Iraq is providing each unit with tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles and infantry Soldiers, Nichols said.

"Having infantry around helps a lot, because you don't want to dismount a tank unless you really have to," he added.

Each tank crew member is important creating a team that works well together to accomplish the mission.

No member of a tank team is more important than another and tank operation cannot be accomplished without every part.

After wrapping up their month-long exercise at the National Training Center, the Fort Irwin's Boxing Challenge June 13 gave 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers a chance to unwind while they waited for their return flights to Fort Hood.

"It's a good way to end the rotation," said Lt. Col. Patrick Matlock, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment commander, as he watched while 11 of his Soldiers jumped into the ring.

Organized by Fort Irwin's Morale, Welfare and Recreation office, the boxing challenge showcased ten, three-round fights and drew a large audience, as Soldiers filled the bleachers to watch their fellow Soldiers slug it out.

Ready

"Black Jack" Soldiers

**Story and Photos by
Spc. Robert Yde**



to Rumble

compete in Fort Irwin's Boxing Challenge



"I really like boxing, so its fun to see Soldiers in the ring," said Pfc. Lorenzo Byrd, a light-wheel vehicle mechanic with 4-9 Cav.

Evidently, Byrd was not the only person who liked boxing, as there were few empty seats left in the fitness center.

"Look up there," said Command Sgt. Major James Daniels, 4-9 Cav's top noncommissioned officer, pointing to the crowd, "The majority of our troops are here to support them."

The first match of the night featured Pfc. Tyler Burdette and Pfc. Jordan Wilmes, both from Troop C, 4-9 Cav.

"It just sounded fun," said Burdette, a Humvee gunner, explaining why he chose to fight.

Burdette said the fight was a chance to release a little aggression, and he just happened to be fighting his friend Wilmes, also a Humvee gunner, because the boxers were matched up by weight.

Wilmes was declared the winner of the first bout, but according to Daniels, all of the participants were winners.

"We had a lot of winners and really no losers, because the guys gave their heart and their all-and-all," Daniels said.

Daniels added that Troop C. is the most aggressive unit in the brigade, and that his Soldiers were very eager to participate in the fights.

"Our guys were motivated when they heard about the boxing match," Daniels explained. "They all wanted to get in it."

Staff Sgt. Damien Crawford, a cavalry scout with Troop C, 4-9 Cav. agreed with Daniels assessment. .

"This is just how we are," Crawford said. "We're scouts, we love to do hooah stuff and here we are."

For Crawford, who began boxing in Kuwait in 1998, the event offered him a chance to do what he loves.

"I stepped in the ring and fell in love with it," the Orlando, Fla. native said. "Once I returned to Fort Hood, I tried out for the boxing team and made it, and it's been a love of mine ever since."

At one time, Crawford harbored ambitions of turning his hobby into a career, even spending a year training at a procamp.



Although his career never materialized, his love of the sport has not diminished.

"A lot of guys have never done it before and I encouraged them to give it a try," Crawford said. "It's a wonderful sport."

While Crawford had little difficulty with his opponent, other Soldiers were not so fortunate.

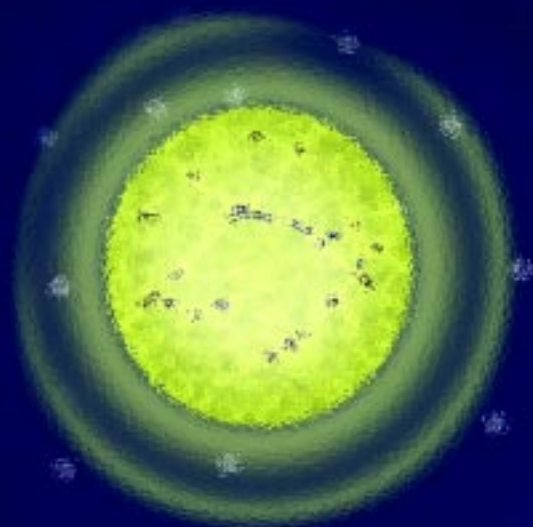
"I got pummeled," Pvt. Nicholas Wansten said after his match.

Wansten, another scout, was on the losing end of what was the night's bloodiest fight.

"I think maybe he had a little more experience," Wansten said. "I don't know - I don't have much."

And while the outcome of the fight was not what he had hoped for, Wansten said he had fun, and was especially pleased with the turnout.

"Sport events help bring the community together and make Soldiers more motivated," Wansten said.



Black Jack Brigade Ball



Friday, August 18th, 2006



Killeen Civic Center



BLACK JACK

The World's 911